

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 IO-14 ISO-00 NIC-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 SAJ-01 SAM-01

AID-20 ACDA-19 DRC-01 /177 W
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R 221448Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7144

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

S/AMEMBASSY PARIS 3943

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION USUN

USMISSION GENEVA

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GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD AND DAMASCUS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EG, UR, XF

SUBJ: PRAVDA COMMENTS ON SOVIET ROLE IN SUEZ

CANAL RECONSTRUCTION

1. COMMENTARY BY PRAVDA ME SPECIALIST DEMCHENKO

(PRAVDA MARCH 22) DEFENDS SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN

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RESTORATION OF SUEZ CANAL, BUT WARNS THAT PARTIAL

MEASURES - INCLUDING DISENGAGEMENT-ARE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR ME SETTLEMENT.

2. DEMCHENKO NOTES THAT SOVIET EXPERTS ARE NOW IN EGYPT AT THE INVITATION OF THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT TO DISCUSS SOVIET ASSISTANCE IN CLEARING SUEZ CANAL. PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROJECT IS DESCRIBED AS ONE OF LINKS IN SOVIET-EGYPTIAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION. THUS, DEMCHENKO SAYS STATEMENTS OF "CERTAIN WESTERN POLITICAL AND MILITARY OFFICIALS" THAT SOVIET UNION IS MORE INTERESTED IN REOPENING OF CANAL THAN OTHER COUNTRIES ARE CLEARLY UNFOUNDED. IN FACT, IF ONE CONSIDERS STATISTICS ON PAST USE OF CANAL, CAPITALIST COUNTRIES WILL USE IT MORE THAN SOVIET UNION.

3. DEMCHENKO CONCLUDES THAT OPENING OF CANAL CANNOT SUBSTITUTE FOR SETTLEMENT OF THE ME CRISIS AS A WHOLE. SETTLEMENT CANNOT BE ACHIEVED BY MEANS OF PARTIAL MEASURES LIKE DISENGAGEMENT OF FORCES, SIGNIFICANCE OF WHICH WILL DEPEND ON DEGREE TO WHICH IT IS LINKED TO FURTHER STEPS TOWARD ELIMINATING CONSEQUENCES OF ISRAELI AGGRESSION. A JUST PEACE IS POSSIBLE ONLY ON BASIS OF ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES AND RESTORATION OF LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS.

4. COMMENT: DEMCHENKO PIECE MAY REFLECT SENSITIVITY TO POSSIBLE CRITICISM THAT SOVIET ARE PARTICIPATING IN PARTIAL MEASURES TOWARD ME SETTLEMENT FOR MERCENARY REASONS. ALTHOUGH HE DOES NOT DISPARAGE DISENGAGEMENT AS FORCEFULLY AS PRAVDA'S WEEKEND COMMENTATOR ON MARCH 17, HE REITERATES SOVIET LINE THAT IT CANNOT REPLACE OVERALL SETTLEMENT.
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